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DICKRAN KOUYMJIAN
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BANAK: SIX PROJECTS FOR ITS RECONSTRUCTION

TIRAN MARUT'YAN

It is well known in the history of Armenian architecture that bishop Nersēs Tayec'i, who was later (641) elected catholicos, had already in the 630s in his native town Išxan, the ancestral estate of the famous Mamikonian naxarar family of Armenia, constructed the important church of Išxan. The edifice, though subjected to certain modifications during the past 1300 years, still stands today.

Nersēs Tayec'i marked the first years of his patriarchal office by erecting a number of monuments, among them the famous church of Zuart'noc' (Zvart'noc'), thus receiving the title the «Builder» from his contemporaries.

Zuart'noc', considered by its imposing size and shape as one of the miracles of the seventh century, embellished the Ararat Valley for 300 to 350 years before it was destroyed, and in the course of centuries covered with an impenetrable layer of earth. Historical references concerning the monument gradually diminished until it was virtually forgotten.

During 1888 and 1890 the Vienna University professor J. Strzygowski visiting St. Ējmiacin and seeing plaited-basket capitals presumed them to have belonged to the church of Zuart'noc'. The capitals at Ējmiacin heightened the interest in the monument. At the beginning of the twentieth century vardapet Xač'ik Dadean started excavations on the site, while the data later discovered by T'oros T'oramanyan gave rise to the first generally recognized project for the temple's reconstruction (1).

(1) T'oros T'oramanyan, *Materials for the History of Armenian Architecture*, vol. I, Erevan, 1942 (in Armenian), pp. 236-270.

Excavations directed by N. Marr at Ani, the medieval capital of Armenia, in 1906 uncovered the ruins of the church of St. Gregory — a replica of Zuartʿnocʿ — constructed in 989-1020 by king Gagik I. These data also prompted Tʿoramanyan to initiate a project for reconstructing Gagik's church, called Gagikašēn (2). The great interest

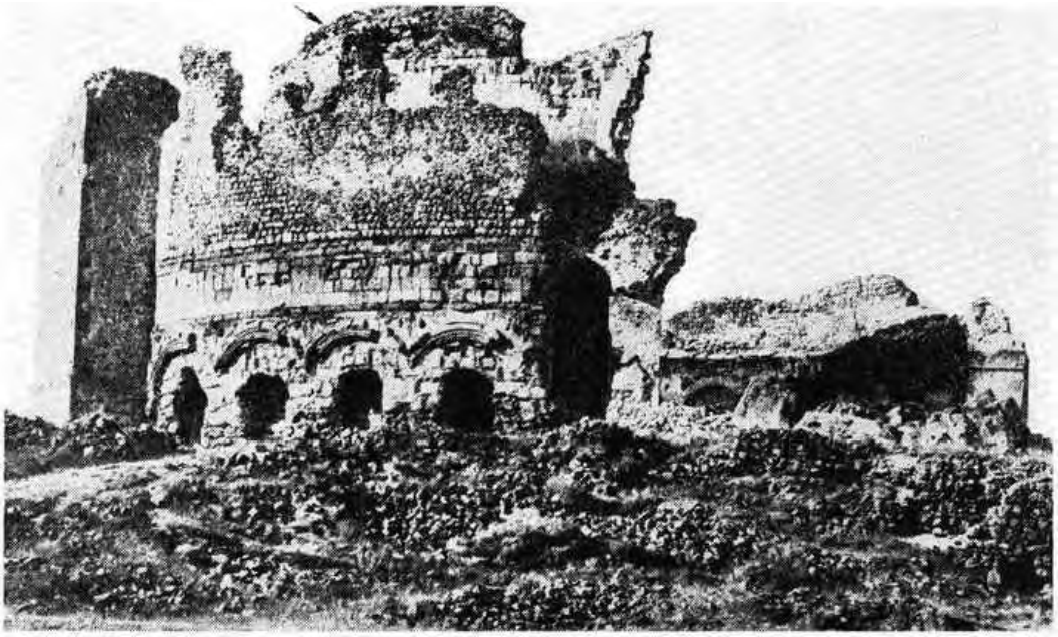

FIG. 1. Banak. Northeastern view of the ruins. Photograph (1902/1907).

aroused by these monuments and their reconstruction stimulated E. Takaïšvili, for the second time, as far back as in 1907, to organize an expedition with the participation of architectural engineer A. Kalgin to go to Taykʿ (Tao in Georgian) to examine the church of Banak (Bana in Georgian) of the Zuartʿnocʿ type. An earlier expedition was organized by him in 1902 with the participation of architect S. Kldiašvili (3). The ruins of Banak are located within the contemporary boundaries of Turkey, just 65 km. west of the city of Kars (Figs. 1-3).

(2) Tʿoramanyan, *ibid.*, pp. 270-281.

(3) E. S. Takaïšvili, «Bana», *Xristijanski pamjatniki, Materialy po arxeologii Kavkaza,* fasc. XII, Moscow, 1909.

The first reconstruction of Banak was produced by S. Kldiašvili who took measurements of the temple in 1902 (4). Evaluating this reconstruction, E. Takaïšvili declared that architect S. Kldiašvili, being limited in time, had taken the most accessible measurements

FIG. 2. Banak. Southeastern view of the tuins. Photograph (1970).

and was deprived of the opportunity to produce a complete reconstruction; however, his work had certain merits (5).

This reconstruction is répresented by three plan drawings and one section (Figs. 6-7). According to it, the church was double-tiered, the first floor having a big drum and the second formed by a small dome-drum completed by a semi-spherical ceiling.

The reconstruction by Kldiašvili showed the later (fifteenth-sixteenth centuries) wall erected on the originally built external circular

(4) Takaïšvili, *ibid.*
(5) *Ibid.*

FIG. 3. Banak. Open ends of the gallery of the first and second storeys. Photograph (1970).

wall as well as the upper storey of the circular gallery of the first tier which originated through this new wall. However it failed to feature an earlier, important reconstruction consisting of an enlargement of the drum wall on the outside in the form of a very deep vaulted wall inside the circular gallery, which resulted in a considerable narrowing

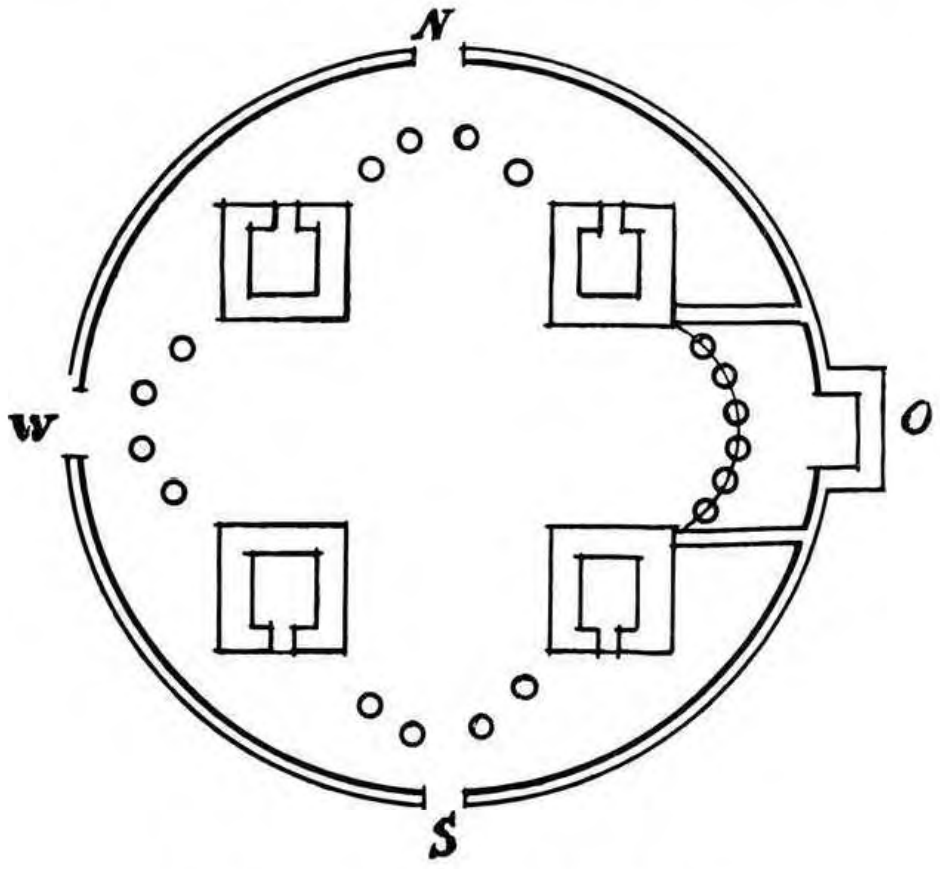

FIG. 4. Banak. Ground plan by C. Koch (1846).

of the circular gallery. Neglecting this detail and the careless dimensioning have resulted in the reduction of the real size of the general plan of Banak in the drawings presented by Kldiašvili. It also caused the number of polygonal sides of the big drum to be reduced to 24 instead of 28.

After Kldiašvili a new reconstruction for the church of Banak was produced by the engineer Kalgin (6) who presented detailed dimen-

(6) Takaišvili, *ibid.*

sions of the ruins. Kalgin's effort is represented by four plan drawings, one section, the west façade elevation, and some other partial drawings (Figs. 8-11).

According to the evidence presented by Kalgin, the church of Banak is a vertically diminished three-tiered structure, all tiers or storeys

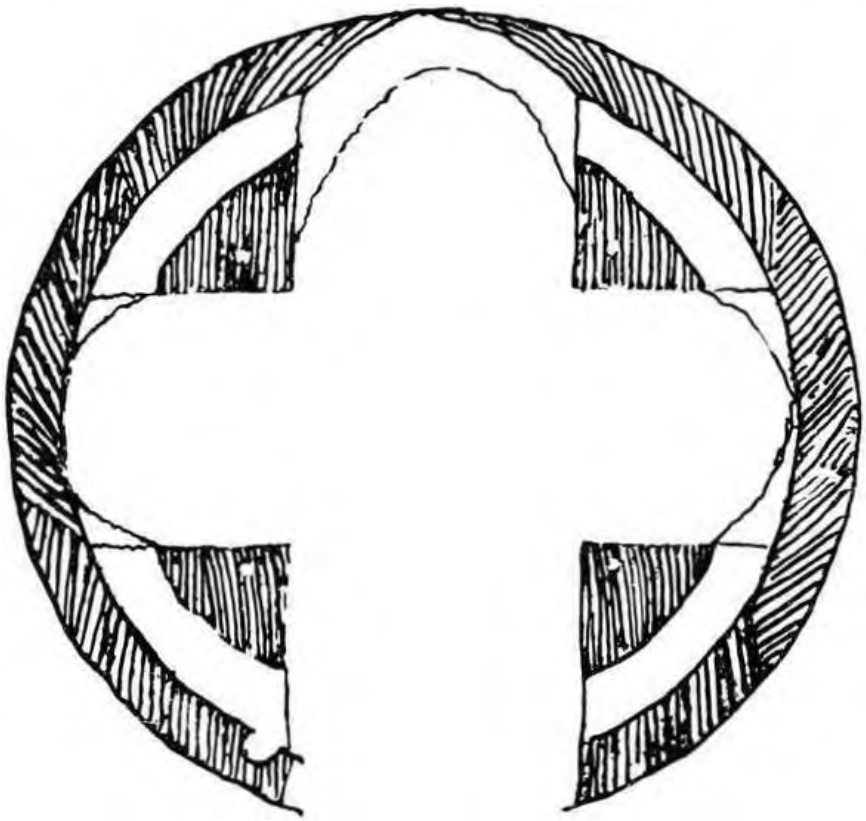

FIG. 5. Banak. Ground plan after D. Bakradze (1881).

being constructed circularly. Kalgin had time to study and carefully measure the ruins. Half-demolished then, but still generally in an upright position, were the circular walls (except for the northwest section), however the central part contained the upright eastern section consisting of the main apse and two tower-like volumes completely occupying the vertical dimension.

Kalgin has provided us with the original dimensional data. It is interesting to note that a detailed comparison of these data with pho-

tographs taken in 1902, 1907 (Fig. 1) (7) as well as in 1970 (Figs. 2,3) (8) leads us to the conviction that Kalgin's measurements were made with the utmost possible precision. Even a nearly completely demo-

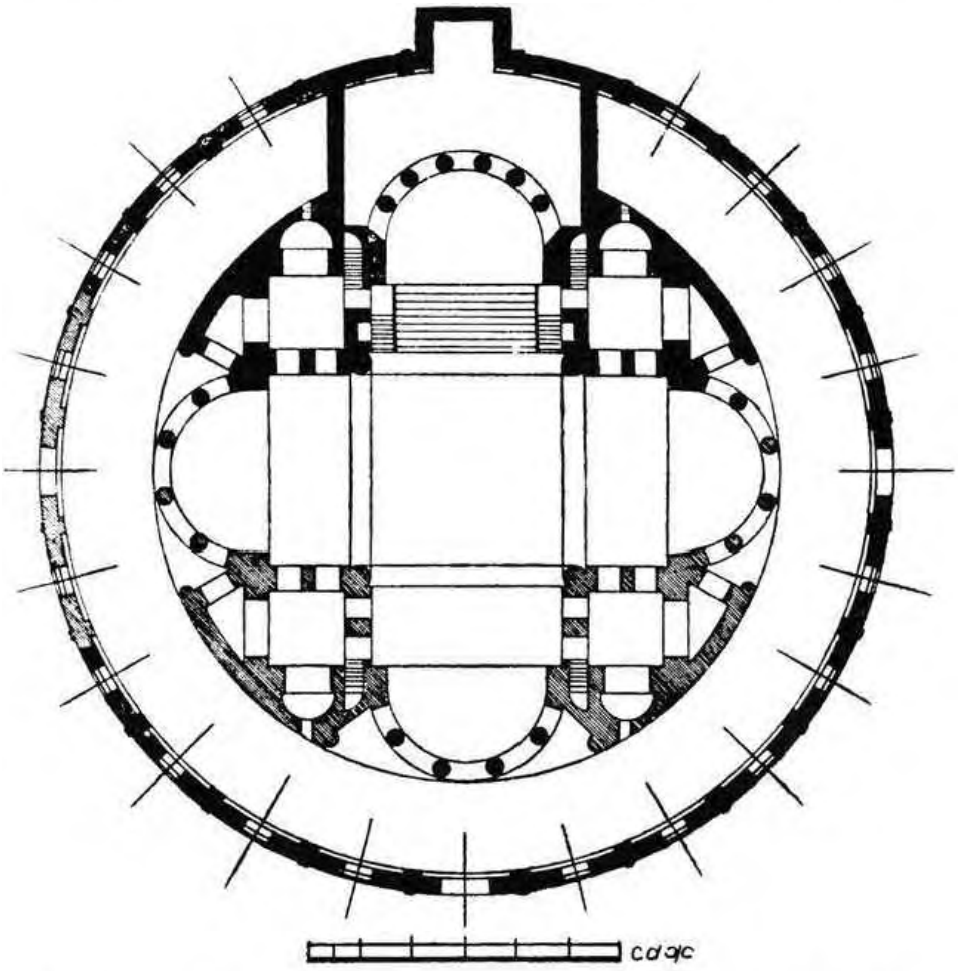

FIG. 6. Banak. Ground plan. Reconstruction by S. Kldiašvili (1902).

lished monument in the photographs of 1970 shows the interior details of the church as precisely delineated in the scientifically scaled drawings by Kalgin of 1907. This circumstance makes it possible to give credit to the dimensional data of Kalgin and, therefore, to seriously consider some of his suggestions.

(7) T'oramanyan, *op. cit.*, pp. 270-281.
(8) The recent photos are by Franco Marra of Italy (see *infra* note 17).

Kalgin's drawings reflect Banak's earlier reconstructions including a very thick vaulted wall joined later to the external wall from the inside of the circular gallery (Fig. 10). However these drawings totally disregard the reconstructions of a comparatively later period

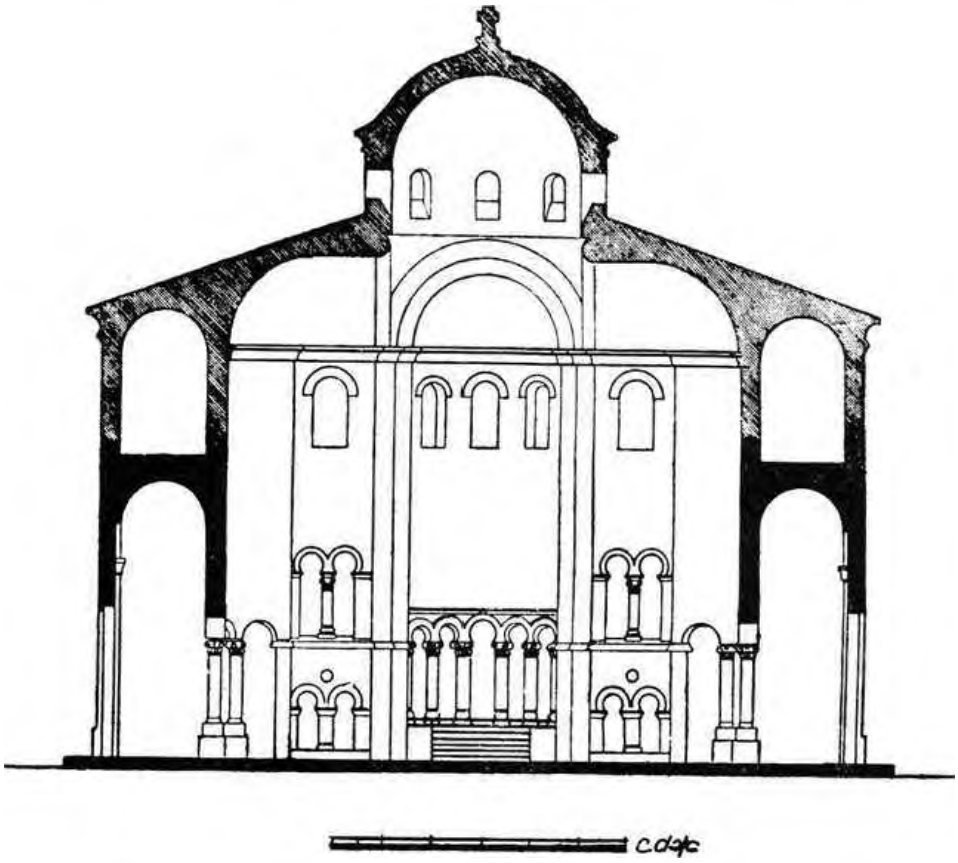

FIG. 7. Banak. Sectional elevation. Reconstruction by S. Kldiašvili.

which produced the second floor of the circular gallery previously explored in a reconstruction by Kldiašvili.

In the reconstruction by Kalgin the third floor of the church has received a special form. Relying on the description left by the nineteenth century researcher D. Bakradze, that «... each storey had a circular gallery», more particularly, «... around the dome at the uppermost part its foundation there was the completion of the

church walls with a gallery passing along the top...» (9), and having himself seen the existence of the circular gallery in the dome of the

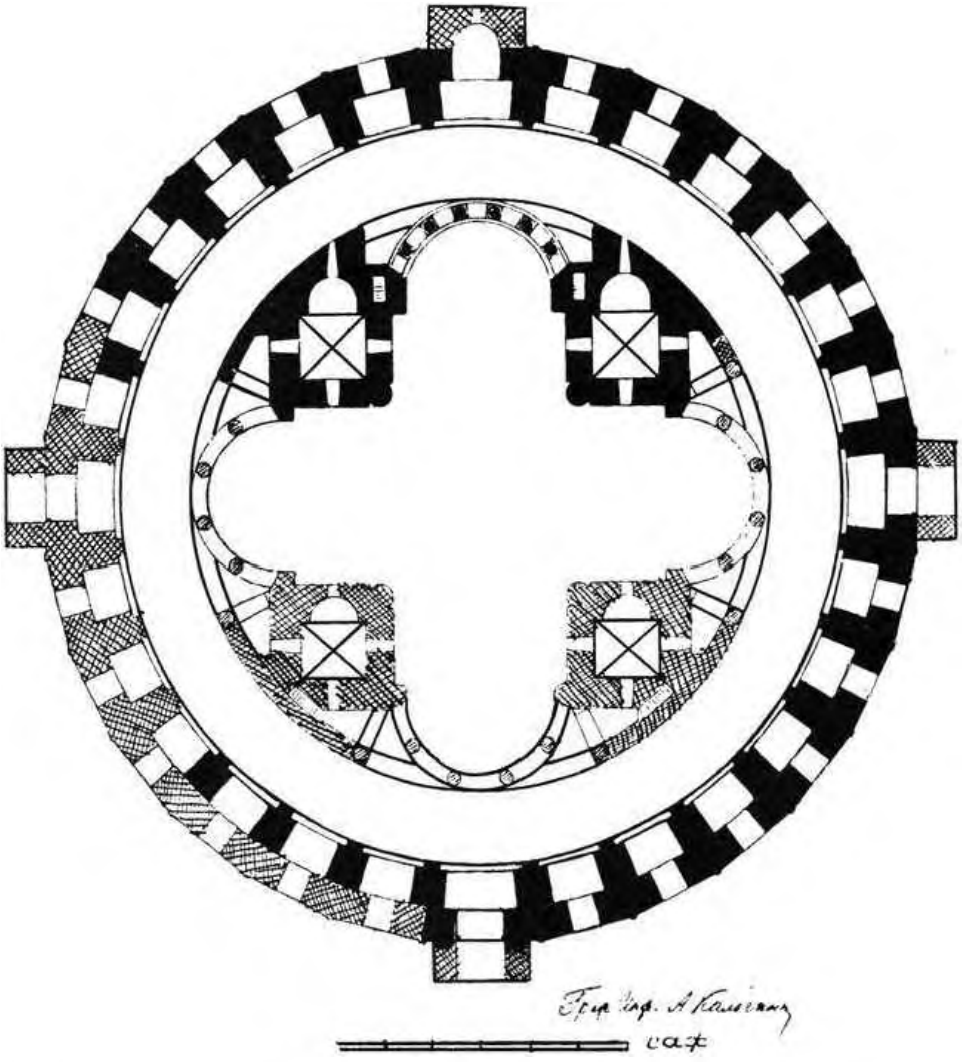

FIG. 8. Banak. Ground plan. Reconstruction by A. Kalgin (1907).

historic church in the village of Ełegnamor (Changli) in the Kałzvan region of the province of Kars, as well as taking into consideration the disproportionally small size of the dome-bearing square bay of

(9) D. Bakradze, *Arxeologičeskoe putešestvie po Gurii i Ačare*, St. Petersbourg, 1888, p. 93.

the foundation of the church, Kalgin assumed the existence of a circular gallery around the dome, this gallery opening itself onto the interior of the temple.

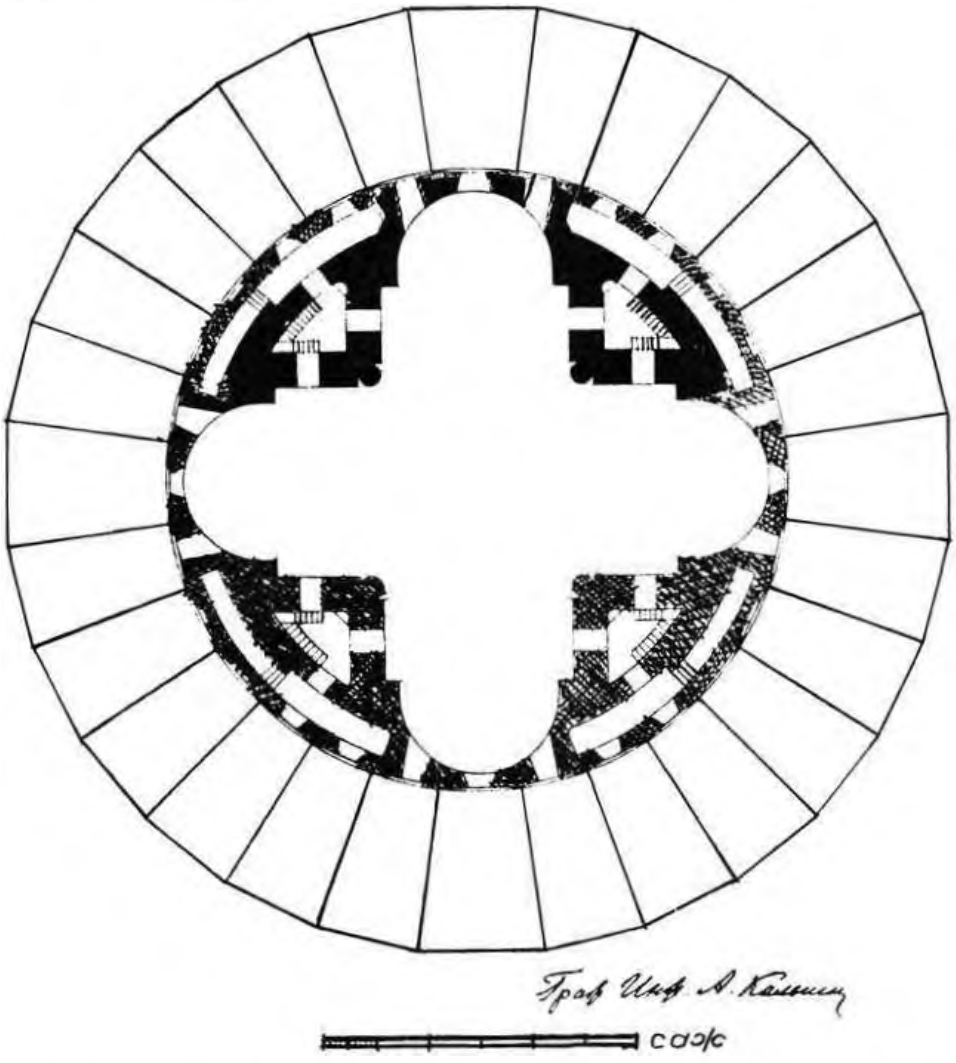

FIG. 9. Banak. Plan of the second storey. Reconstruction by A. Kalgin.

The third successive reconstruction of Banak (Figs. 12-13) is to be considered the one presented in the drawings which have lately been published in specialized works and textbooks on the history of architecture and in encyclopaedias (10). That reconstruction has been

(10) G. N. Čubinašvili, «Arxitektura Gruzii», *Vseobščaja istorija arxitekturi*, vol. 3, Moscow-Leningrad, 1966.

occasionally represented by a ground plan or by a ground plan and a section, in all cases without the general frontal rendering or elevation. Thus, the section showing the church as a two-storeyed structure, was taken from the reconstruction by Kldiašvili and with certain modifica-

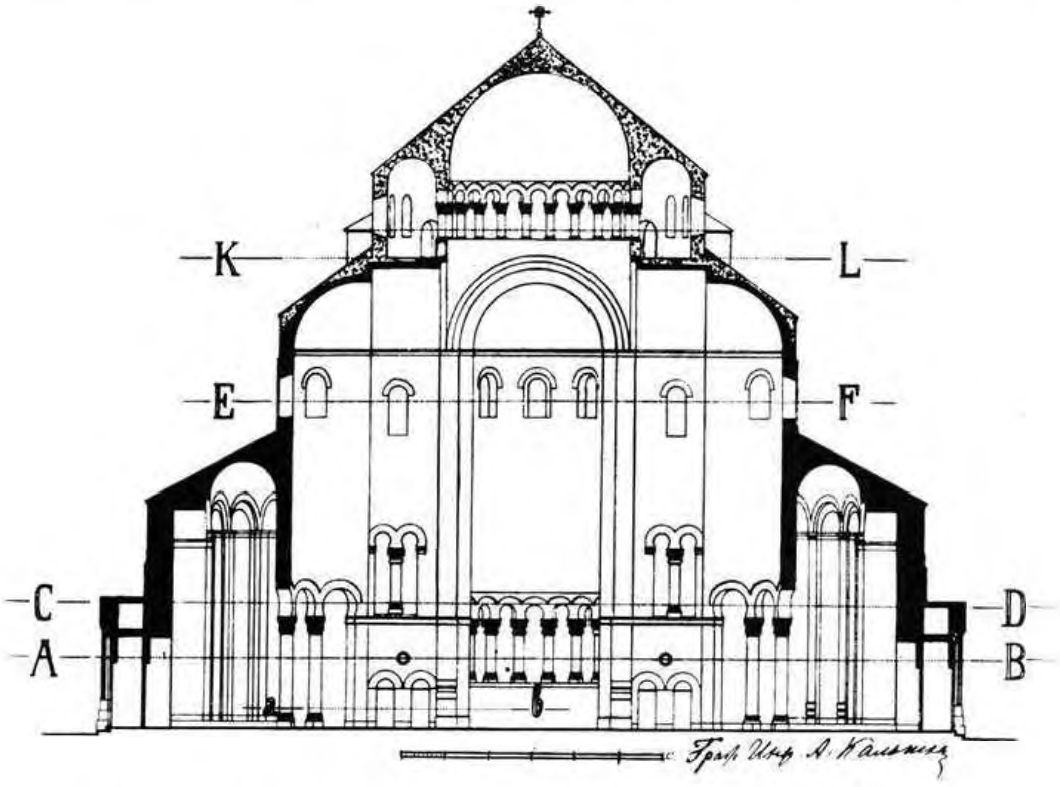

FIG. 10. Banak. Sectional elevation. Reconstruction by A. Kalgin.

tions was accomodated to the plan of Kalgin. The latter showed the state of the monument with the reconstruction of the tenth century, which, without sufficient reason, had been attributed to the seventh century and only in rare cases to the tenth or to the seventh to the tenth centuries.

Another proposition (chronologically the fifth) for the reconstruction of Banak was put forth by S. Mnac'akanyan (11). For him the church is three-tiered in the first and third storeys, circular (i.e. a many sided

(11) S. X. Mnac'akanyan, *Zuart'noc' and Monuments of the Same Type*, Erevan, 1971 (in Armenian), pp. 188-199; *idem*, *Zvartnoc*, Moscow, 1971, pp. 65-70.

polygon) at the foundation and cross-shaped in the second stage (Figs. 14-16). The author arrived at this cross-shaped form by discarding as non-existent the four diagonal sections of the external circular wall, while the sections in the directions of the main axes with triple windows were retained in their positions, producing an unnatural two-meter projection from the inside circular wall.

FIG. 11. Banak. Elevation of the western façade. Reconstruction by A. Kalgin.

Mnac'akanyan purged this plan of the church from his later contributions, however he did not spare the originally existing niche-shaped chapel on the eastern side of the external wall and substituted the transversal dimensions of the facets as well as other details. He also modified the relative dimensions of the external ornamentation on the drum walls — the decorative arcade of spandrels, sections of walls, and connecting areas.

Apparently, Mnac'akanyan has chosen to ignore the existing photographs of the monument, as well as the realistic and reliable data presented by Kalgin's unique and most valuable measurements. Rather, he seems to manipulate, with an undue freedom, the data to fit his

theories. It appears from the drawings that some of the church's nodal points have been modified and changed in size.

Similiar methods appear to have been at times used by Mnac'akanyan in reconstructing the second storeys of the churches of Zuart'noc', Liakit, and Garni (12).

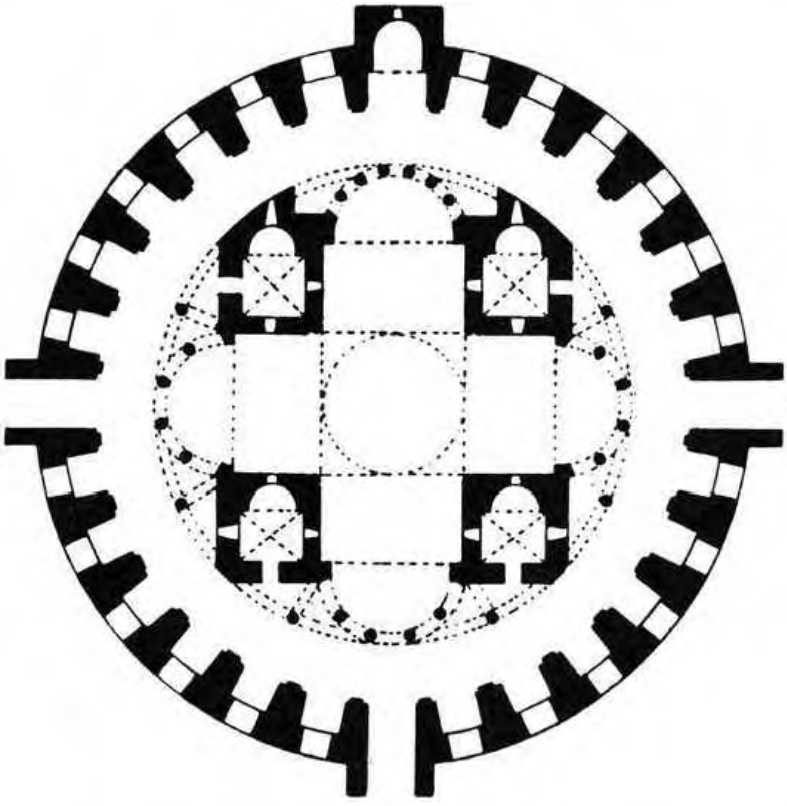

FIG. 12. Banak. Plan of the church after the handbook *Vseobščaja istorja arxitekturi (The General History of Architecture)*.

In 1977 an album by R. Mepisashvili and V. Tsintsadze dedicated to Georgian art presents a new reconstruction (the sixth by number) of the church of Banak (Bana) (13) accompanied by a short explanation to the effect that the reconstruction of the church of the first half of the seventh century was based on the work presented by Takaïšvili (14).

(12) *Ibid.*

(13) Rusudan Mepisashvili and Vakhtang Tsintsadze, *The Arts of Ancient Georgia*, London, 1979, p. 94; German edition, Leipzig, 1977, same pagination.

(14) *Ibid.*, pp. 95-97.

It should be noted that by saying «the work of E. Takaisvili» is meant the measurements and the project for reconstruction published by Takaïšvili, but which in fact belonged to architect Kalgin. The album

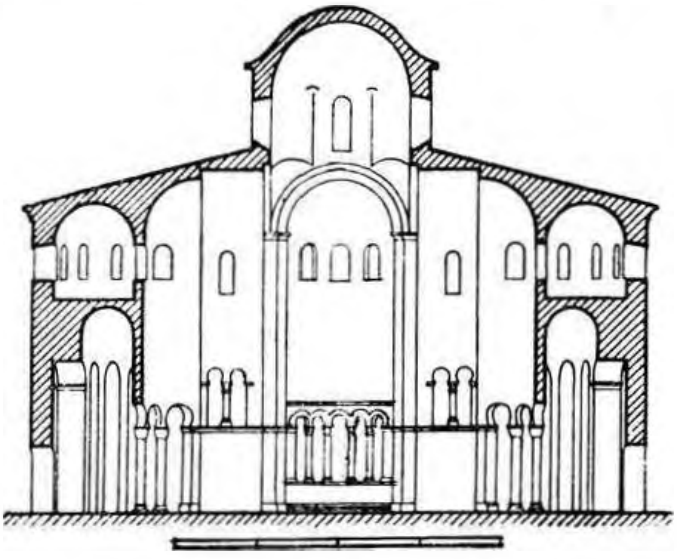

FIG. 13. Banak. Sectional elevation after the same. *Vseobščaja istorja arxitekturi.*

also presents five photographs showing inside and outside views of the structure. The authors give a detailed account of the church where specifically they assert:

> Further examples of the spectacular flowering of Georgian architecture in the first half of the 7th century are provided by Ishkhani and Bana in the south-west of what was then Georgia. Ishkhani, however, has been drastically rebuilt, and Bana was badly damaged by shelling in the mid-19th century. Built of carefully dressed stone with ornamental details, Bana is a tetraconch of colossal dimensions, with corner rooms set between the apses; the whole composition is enclosed by a circular ambulatory. The apses are high, and open out into the ambulatory through horseshoe arches set on pillars with relief capitals. The corner rooms rise to the same height as the apses, and have three floors.
>
> The tetraconch with corner rooms, introduced into Georgia with monuments of the Jvari type, is the composition on which the Bana church is based, but with certain modifications: the inte-

rior is broken up by numerous arches, and the ground-plan of the exterior is circular. From the limited material available to us, it seems that Bana must have looked somewhat as follows. The ambulatory was probably originally single-storeyed, its walls faced on the outside with dressed stone and adorned with blind arcading and vine tendrils, a motif commonly used here in the 6th and 7th centuries. Blind arcading likewise ran all the way round the interior. Here, however, the arches sprang from boldly projecting pilasters, making the arcading an important feature of the construction. The upper storey of the ambulatory is built of coarse, roughhewn stones, and contrasts starkly with the lower level; it was probably added in the 9th century, when, according to historical documents, the church was rebuilt under Bishop Saban. The niches in the ambulatory were presumably also bricked in at this time. The diagrammatic reconstruction of Bana as it originally looked is based on the assumptions outlined above.

Ishkhani was rebuilt in the 9th century, and then again in the 11th century by the architect Ioane Morchaisdze. All that remains of the 7th-century building is the richly decorated arcading of the eastern apse. Besides Ishkhani and Bana, there is another small church dating from the 8th-9th century in Lekiti [Liakit] in the historical province of Saingilo (15).

In their own words, the authors attempted to represent the originally constructed church (Figs. 17-18). It is to be noted that the west façade of the first floor is pictured in the same way as that of Kalgin. Only in one fragment did they deviate from the situation existing in the ruins. Thus, an old photograph of the central facet on the east shows that the two columns on both sides of the entrance have double capitals, the right and left arches of the facet resting on the top capital and the central arch resting on the bottom capital and embracing a wider facet.

However, Mepisashvili and Tsintsadze were trying to substantiate the arches as having different spans on the same capitals, but this is not so as we have seen.

Unfortunately, except for the front of the first storey of Banak, the upper part of the same drawing as well as the other drawings of

(15) Mepisashvili and Tsintsadze, pp. 65-66; the quotation is taken directly from the English edition.

their reconstruction do not correspond to the purpose envisaged by the authors: they do not represent the original structure, are not suppor-

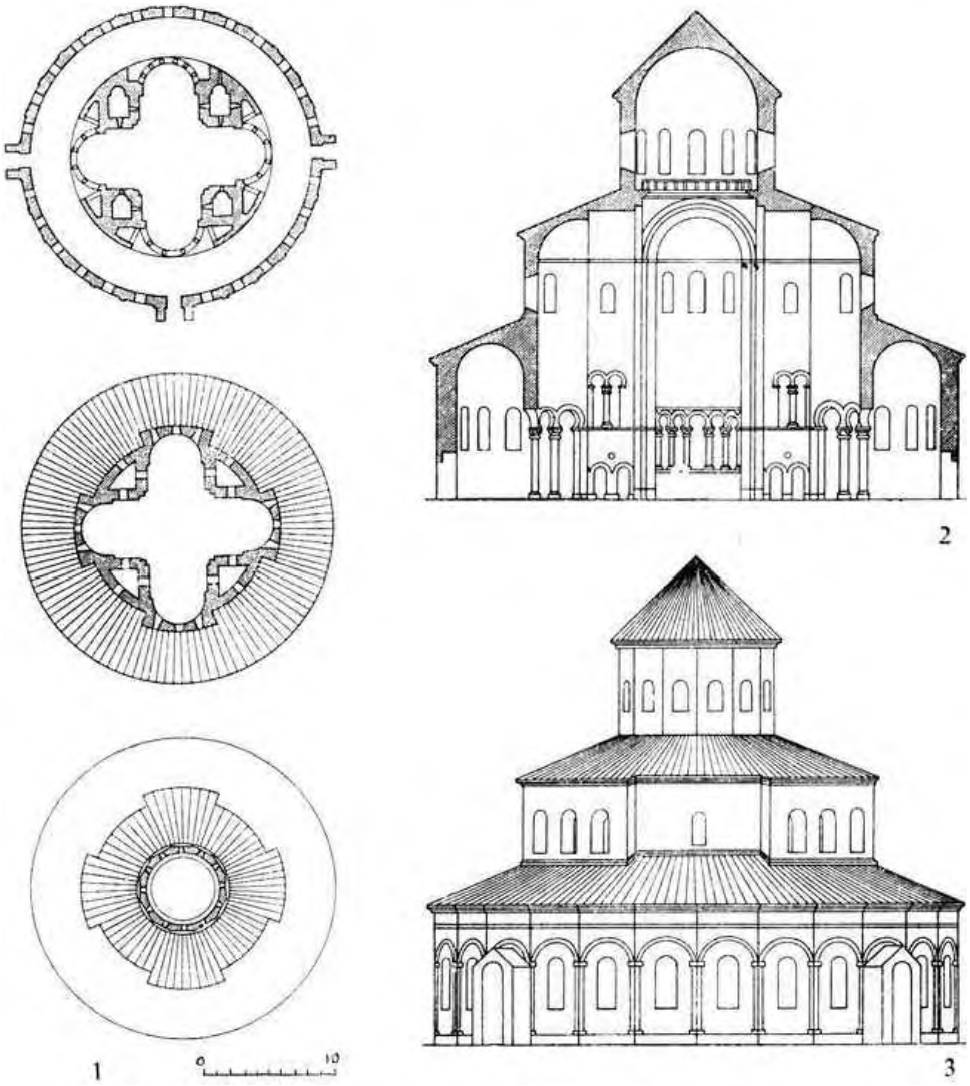

FIG. 14. Banak. Ground plan. Reconstruction by S. Mnac'akanyan (1971).
FIG. 15. Banak. Sectional elevation. Reconstruction by S. Mnac'akanyan.
FIG. 16. Banak. Front elevation in the diagonal direction. Reconstruction by S. Mnac'akanyan.

ted by the data obtained by Takaïšvili, and what is most important, do not agree with the material evidence provided by the ruins and existing photographs. It should also be noted that a considerable

part of the data presented at the beginning of the quoted passage, represents a distortion of well known facts.

The bottom drawing of the church (Mepisashvili and Tsintsadze, p. 94) is precisely the plan that had been composed by Kalgin; however, it includes the substantial reconstructions of the tenth century. Yet, it is not the plan of the originally built seventh century edifice, differing from the original by the presence of the arcade wall formed inside the

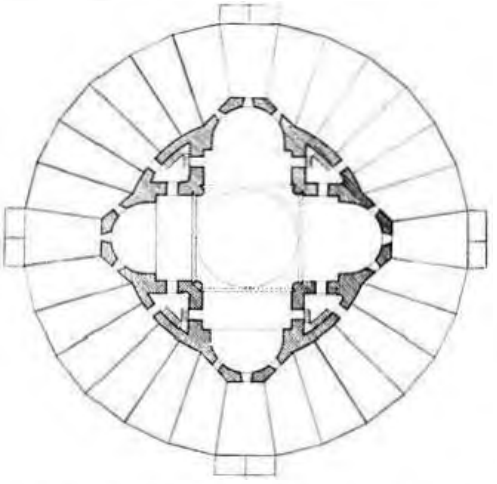

FIG. 17. Banak. Plan of the second storey. Reconstruction by R. Mepisashvili and V. Tsintsadze (1977).

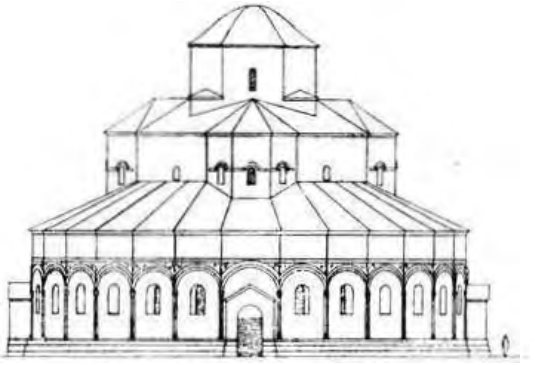

FIG. 18. Banak. Elevation of the western façade. Reconstruction by R. Mepisashvili and V. Tsintsadze.

circular gallery by thick wall-supported pylons about two meters deep, which resulted in the formerly five-meter-wide circular gallery becoming transversally reduced to three meters. This wall had covered the delicately ornamented decorative arcade which formed the interior surface of the external wall. The same reconstruction covered the circular gallery with a new crown, having an incomparably lesser artistic effect. This reconstruction has the plan of the church's second floor repeating the interior outline of the cross structure after the plan of Kalgin, while the external lines not only do not correspond to the lines of the plan, composed with extraordinary precision by Kalgin, nor to the evidence offered by the ruins (photographs, Figs. 1-3), but in addition certain fragments, which have existed for thirteen centuries have been arbitrarily distorted and completely misinterpreted by the

authors of this new reconstruction project. The difficulty concerns the external outline of the second floor of the monument.

It is somehow or other understandable that the presentation by Mnac'akanyan of the second tier of Zuart'noc', as being cross-shaped at the foundation, is largely dictated by his own ideas. He feels at ease with this solution, because the said unit of the monument is no longer extent and he can use this as an argument against opponents of his reconstruction. Yet it is difficult to understand why the same S. Mnac'akanyan, now joined by Mepisashvili and Tsintsadze, ofters a completely gratuitous reconstruction of the second floor of Banak, when in fact there exists, photographically, the given element of the church, and when those who had taken these pictures left to us their drawings and plans, which are both realistic and readily available. This arbitary and partial approach raises serious questions about the scholarship involved.

S. Mnac'akanyan has presented a plan of the second floor of Banak without the external circular wall (Fig. 14). With it he rejects the once existing small circular crowned galleries in separate squares of the second floor. The coursely built interior walls of these galleries are presented by him as the outside front walls of the church. Terminations of the triple-windowed apses are unjustly and unnaturally presented as projecting over the arch-shaped plan of the wall surface.

Mepisashvili and Tsintsadze have even outstripped Mnac'akanyan by re-organizing the unformed wall sections of the cross wings and presenting them in a conventional way as trihedral volumes (Figs. 17-18). In this presentation the individual sections of the external outlines of the church's second storey, executed in a special way on the drawing, render the plan as a whole unprecedented, unnatural, and what is more important, in disagreement with the evidence of the ruins. The top part of the general composition looks tense and ungainly, while the lower part is classically clear, comprehensible, artistically perceivable and distinguished looking. The third dome-drum storey of the church was destroyed long ago and does not exist on site; yet, in the reconstruction it has been given the form of the dome of Djvari, a purely Georgian church. Though it seems to resemble the forms of the basic volume of the lower part of Djvari, here being similar to the second floor of the reconstruction, this reconstruction is quite inappropriate to the first floor of the basic volume of Banak which has a rich decorative ornamentation absolutely different than Djvari.

* * *

There are quite a number of photographs in circulation of the church of Banak, two of which (Figs. 1 and 3) presented in this paper fully satisfy our requirements by demonstrating that Banak at the second level had also been circular and that the now ruined external circular wall had existed, requiring the existence of galleries in the form of passages in the four quarters as shown by Kalgin in his reconstruction of the second stage (Figs. 10-11).

One of these photographs (Fig. 3) presents circular galleries of the first and second floors that were revealed by the destruction of the northern apse and the first drum wall. The second one is a famous picture (Fig. 1) presenting the general view of the northeastern part of the monument. This photograph was used in the above mentioned album by Mepisashvili and Tsintsadze on page 95 together with drawings of the reconstruction (p. 94). The right extremity of this wall at nearly the right angle reveals a projecting piece of masonry which is a side wall of the eastern window belonging to the northern apse. The left extremity of the same rounded wall shows a projecting side wall of the northern window belonging to the eastern apse.

The top part of the picture shows a wall having a rounded shape and located outside the triangular room in the northeastern quarter. Just here on the top (Fig. 1, shown by an arrow) is the once existing crown of the passage-like gallery that had cast a shadow over the angular section created by the two walls below.

One can only wonder at how a simple phenomenon, so clear on this admirable photograph, remained unnoticed, unanalysed, and unappreciated by the authors, and how, at just a few centimeters from it on the facing page of the book (p. 94), drawings had been placed that are quite in contradiction to the picture, i.e., to the realistic and undisputable data of the ruins.

Perhaps at this moment it is worth recalling the first-hand, eyewitness evidence about the church at the end of the last century, contained in diaries of academician D. Bakradze (*supra* note 9), that says, «... on every storey there was a circular gallery». Furthermore, in connection with the diaries, it is interesting to present a diagrammatic drawing which basically resembles the plan of the church's second storey as shown by Kalgin in the passage-like gallery (in the four quarters) and in the external drum-like wall (Fig. 9).

Thus, following the data given by tangible evidence, we consider it proved that at the second level of Banak there also existed at some period a circular gallery in the form of four sections and that interior of the church at the second floor also had the form of a circular drum.

The author of the present lines prepared the very first project of reconstruction for the original seventh century church. It was recommended for publication to the «Haypetrat» publishing house by academician S. T. Eremyan as long ago as 1964. A part of this reconstruction has been published in works by foreign researchers, however, the entire work of reconstruction appeared in print in Armenia in several works (16).

The reconstruction project (in chronological order, the fourth) presented on our part has been established on the basis of critical study of the thus far available reconstructions and the numerous old and new photographs. An important part of these photos has only recently been accessible: about a dozen of them taken in 1970 by Franco Marra (17).

This reconstruction (Fig. 19) represents what had existed of the original church, excluding the additions or modifications of subsequent centuries. These latter have already been presented in the earlier reconstructions by Kldiašvili and Kalgin.

According to our reconstruction, the church of Banak was three-storeyed with three drums placed one upon another with gradually reduced dimensions in the vertical direction (Figs. 20-21). Its elevation lacks the thickening of the external wall on the side of the circular gallery with the vaulted walls, which were added in the tenth century, about two meters thick. In this presentation the circular gallery regains its original form and dimensions.

The decorative arcade which once extent on the inside surface of this external wall was recreated on the plan and section drawings. This decorative arcade had already been shown on an earlier rendering originally produced by T'oros T'oramanyan (18). N. Marr mentioned the destruction of the external drum wall revealing a well-preserved

(16) Tiran Marut'yan, *Tayk'i čartarapetakan hušarjannerə (Architectural Monuments of Tayk')*, Erevan, 1972; *idem*, «Hay čartarpetet'yan hušarjanner», in *Xoraguyn Hayk' (Inner Armenia)*, Erevan, 1978.

(17) *Inner Armenia*, photos by Franco Marra: nos. 7, 10, 27, 28, 33, 38, 39, 46, 48, 49.

(18) T'oramanyan, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

upright inside surface carrying traces of adjoining decorative arcades (19). A sectional drawing (Fig. 20) also presents, beside the ornamental

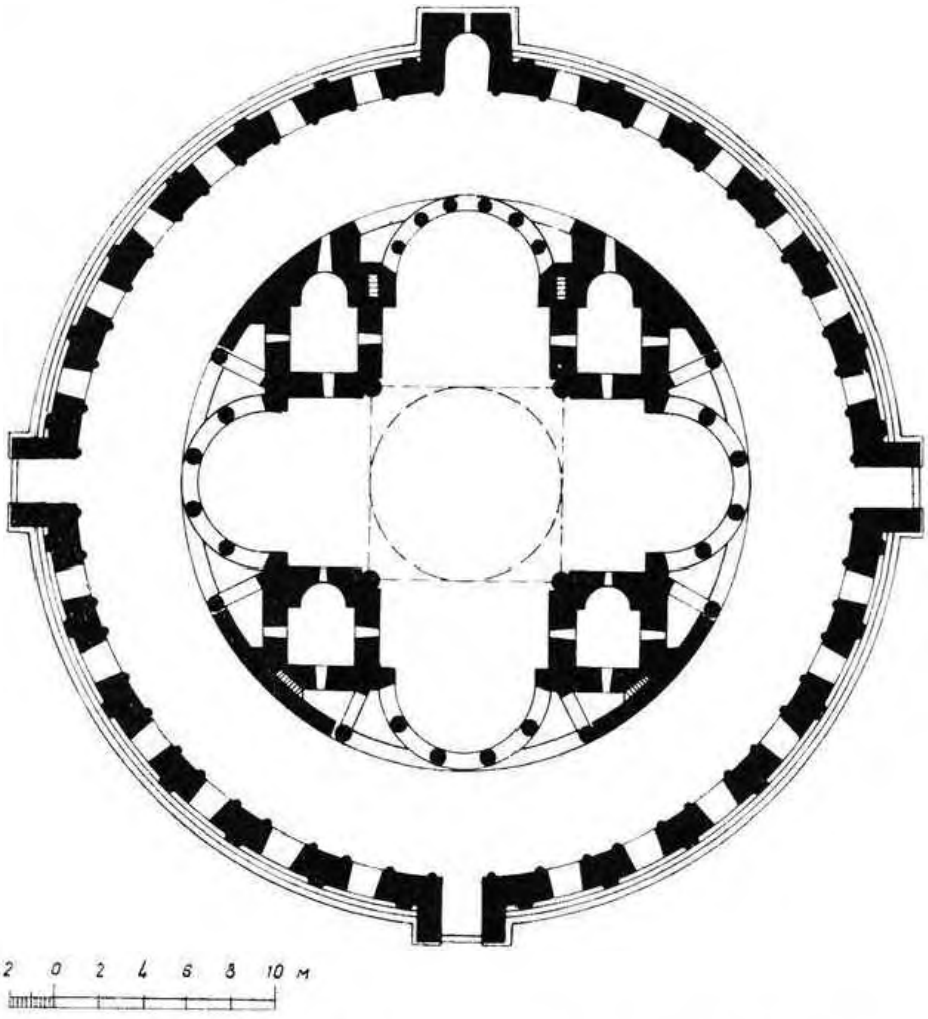

FIG. 19. Banak. Ground plan. Reconstruction by T. Marut'yan (1963).

arcade in the original form and dimensions, the circular gallery and its crown with a five-meter span.

This reconstruction presents a new version of the third floor domical part of the church. There is no available description of the once

(19) Central Archives of the USSR Academy of Sciences, N. Marr Archive, Fund 800, File 1940, p. 20.

extent dome. It has been rendered by each of the authors in the first three reconstructions according to their individual suppositions. Kldiašvili showed the dome drum with eight facets and eight windows (according to the section), while Kalgin showed it with twenty-four facets, twenty of which carried windows while the other four were

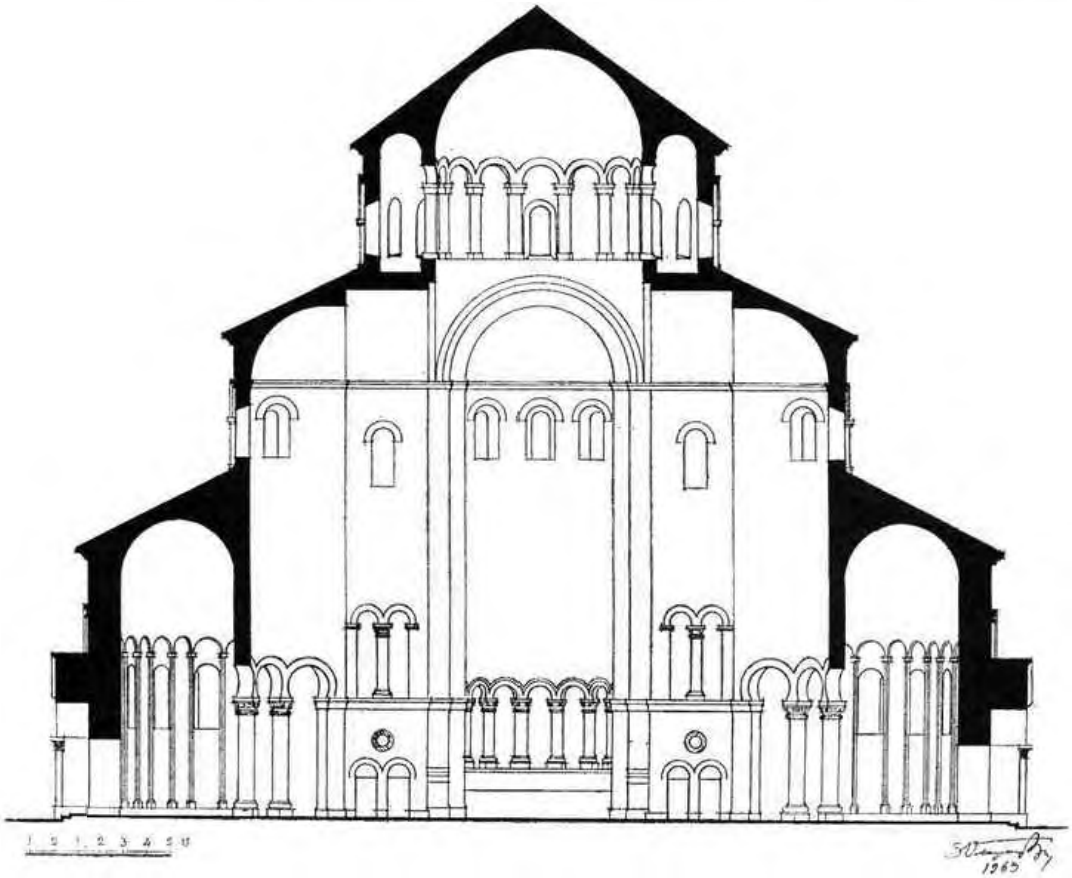

FIG. 20. Banak. Sectional elevation. Reconstruction by T. Marut'yan.

upright, small tower-like volumes, like those of Hřip'simē. In the third, as well as in the sixth reconstructions (Figs. 13, 18) the dome drum is presented with eight facets and four windows. The fifth reconstruction by Mnac'akanyan has twelve facets and as many windows (Fig. 16). In our reconstruction the dome drum has sixteen facets, so that of the evolved versions the first two give single windows on each of the facets, the third version shows windows on eight facets with the remaining eight facets carrying triangular niches each with a semi-conical top part.

The external surface of the dome drum was formed with the decorative arcade similar to the ones on the external surface of the first two drum walls. The dome drum as compared to the reconstruction by Kalgin, received a new proportionality by reducing the number of facets; this presents a better harmony with the lower drums and is better conjugated with them in view of the new scale proportions.

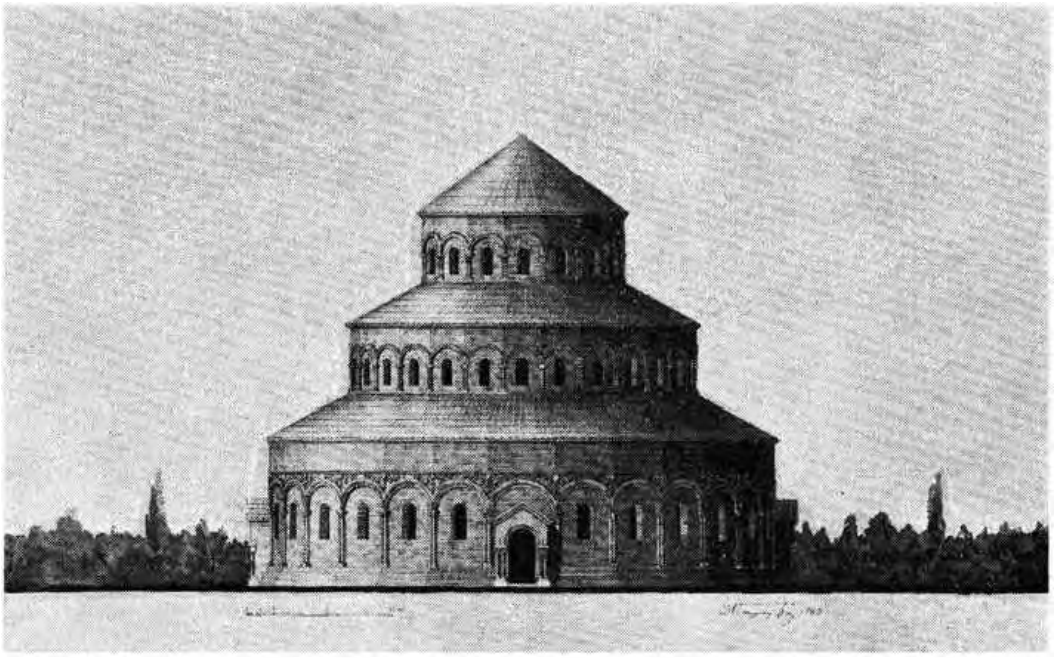

FIG. 21. Elevation of the western façade. Reconstruction by T. Marut'yan.

The third version (Fig. 24) of the dome drum has been developed on our part by using the example of the Ełegnamor (Fig. 25) dome drum with its circular gallery. Inside the dome drum of Ełegnamor the eight columns are standing, two for each arch with a uniform step on top of the dome-carrying arcade. The large niches bear the thrust from the dome-junction system. The very thick drum wall was relieved by the eight niches. The spatially operating dome drum was capable of withstanding numerous earthquakes and preserving its existence up to our time.

In the project by Kalgin (Figs. 25-26) the example of the Ełegnamor dome received a different treatment. His circular gallery is developed in a more classical way with a rotunda. Introducing a passage

around the dome of the Banak temple was prompted by the extremely small dimensions of the dome-carrying square as compared to the large spread of the bottom part of the church.

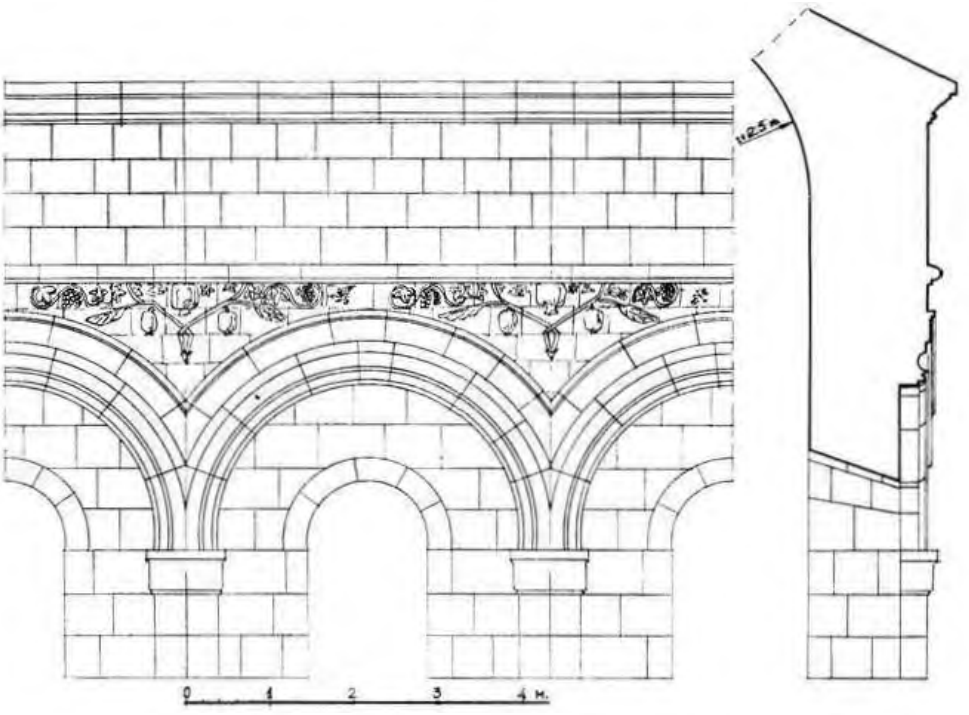

FIG. 22. Banak. A fragment of the decorative arcade on the outside wall of the first storey and ornamentation on the surface of the spandrel (seventh century).

* * *

Reviewing all the reconstructions of the monument and passing review on the general design of the original structure with the aim of at least partially satisfying the reader's curiosity, let us briefly consider the questions of the date of construction of the monument and the personality of its builder.

Carl Koch, who saw the Banak church in 1843, reports: «There had been inscriptions, but the Muslims spoiled them in such a way that nothing can be understood in detail» (20). E. G. Weidenbaum after seeing Banak in 1878, left the following lines in his diary

(20) C. Koch, *Wanderungen im Oriente*, vol. II, *Reise im pontischen Gebirge und im türkischen Armenien*, Weimar, 1846.

(23 June 1878): «Ahmed-Beg says that on the entrance there was an inscription, however the inhabitants removed the stones for construction... the inscription was originally located inside the church, above the southern door» (21). Takaïšvili reports that the local inhabitants

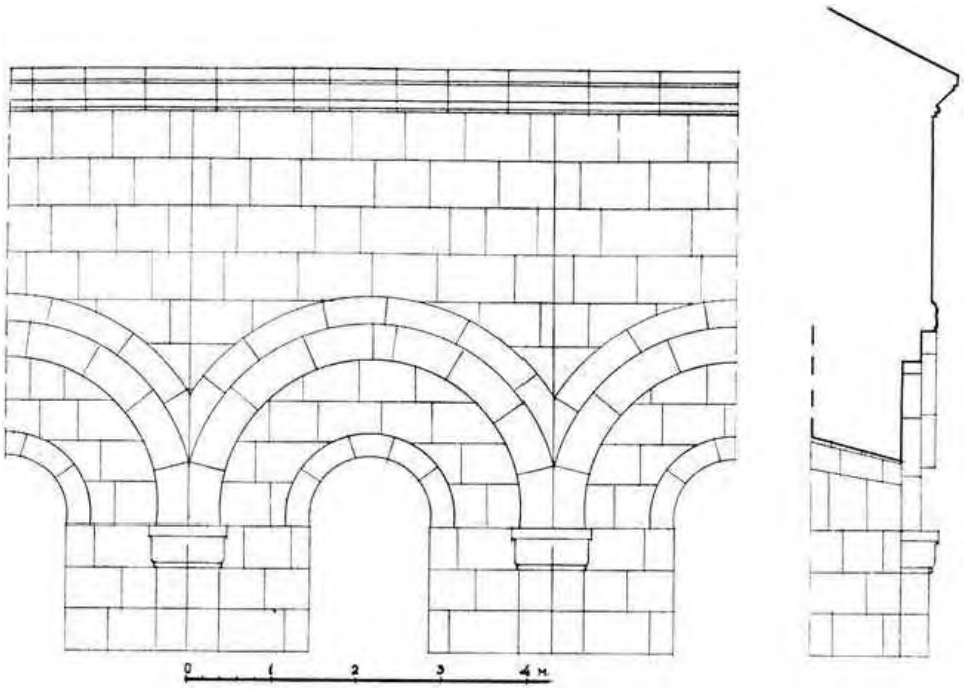

FIG. 23. Banak. A fragment of the decorative arcade on the outside wall of the first storey without the ornamentation in the spandrel (ninth-tenth century). Drawing by T. Marut'yan.

told him that during the war of 1877-1878, «a general of the Russian service took an inscribed stone away from the church» (22).

The minor remains of painted inscriptions are scarcely visible and contain nothing either about the time of construction or about the constructor, while complete inscriptions had been stolen by unknown people. The church, thus, lacks a reliable history.

A number of contemporary researchers (23) relying upon a written statement by Smbat, the son of David, in his *History of the Bagratids* that

(21) Takaïšvili, «Bana», p. 90.
(22) *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.
(23) E. Takaïšvili, Š. Amiranašvili, A. Kuznzecov, N. Severov, etc.

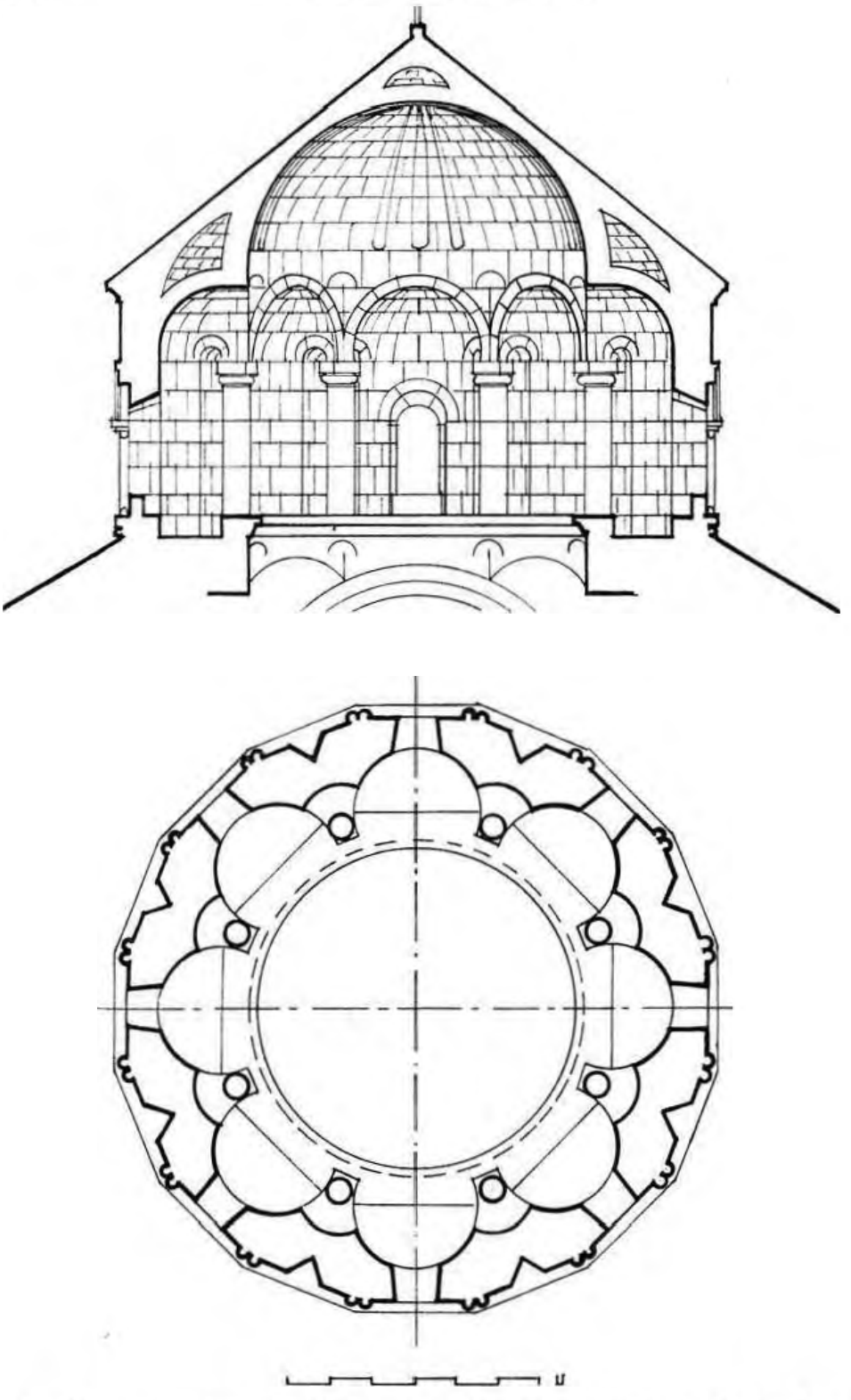

FIG. 24. Banak. A version of the dome section. Reconstruction by T. Marut'yan.

«...Adrnerseh... had built Banak using the work of Kiurikē Baneli who became the first bishop of Bana» (24), have come to the conclusion in that the church was built in 888-923.

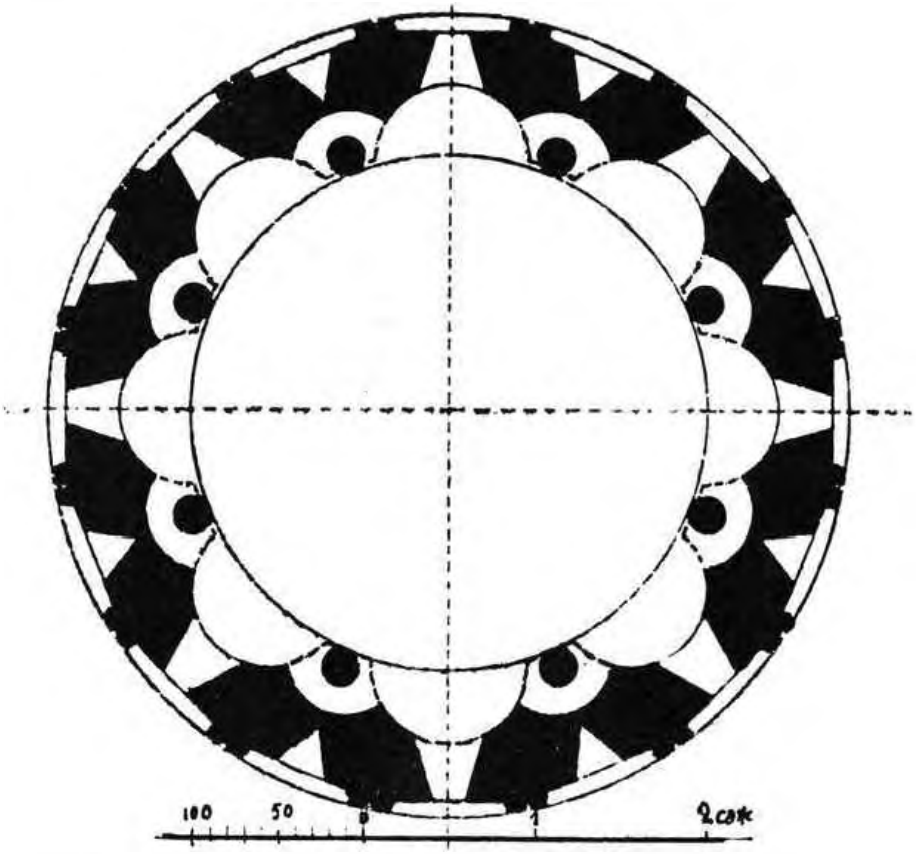

FIG. 25. Ełegnamor (Changli-Kagizman). Plan of the dome section. Dimensioning by A. Kalgin (1907).

Čubinašvili and others, relying on stylistic, artistic, and architectural analyses of the structure have come to the conclusion that it was built in the seventh century (25), and was only rebuilt in the

(24) Takaïšvili, «Bana», p. 88; *idem, Istočniki gryzinskiĭ letopiseĭ, Tri xroniki,* which includes Smbat, the son of David, *History of the Bagratids,* edition and Russian translation in *Sbornik materialov... Kavkaza,* vol. XXVIII (1900), p. 146.

(25) G. N. Čubinašvili, *History of Georgian Art*, vol. I, Tbilisi, 1936 (in Georgian), pp. 175-6.

ninth-tenth centuries. At the present time, the latter opinion is the dominant one.

Indeed, the argument for construction in the seventh century with reconstruction in the tenth century is corroborated by the following information. It is clear through a number of existing photographs

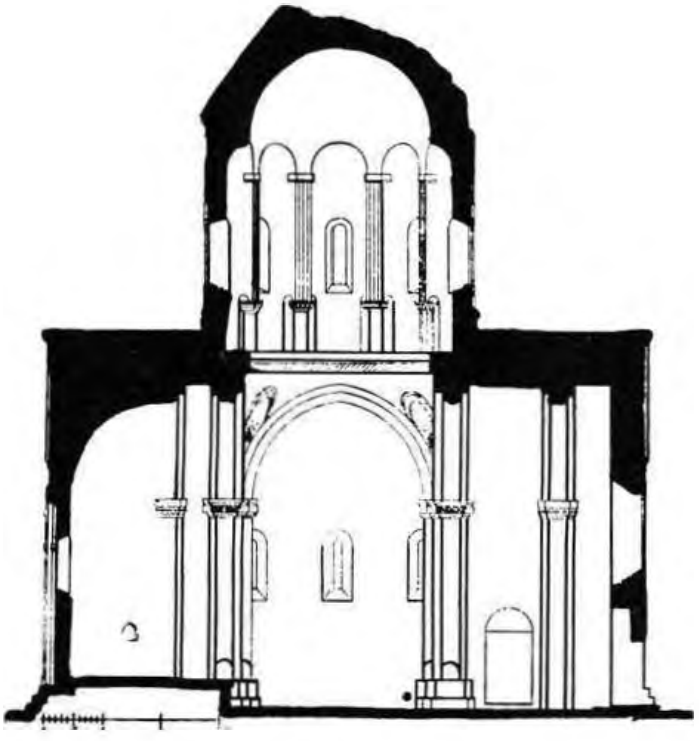

FIG. 26. Elegnamor. Sectional elevation. Dimensioning by A. Kalgin.

that the northeastern section of the large drum wall within the four facets as compared to the southeastern and southwestern sections of the same drum wall is quite different from the point of view of architectural techniques used in its reconstruction and even has a different stylistical expression. Furthermore, what is more important, is that Banak is nearly precisely a formal reproduction of Zuartʿnocʿ, particularly in its details. Thus, if a sufficiently extensive reconstruction of the southeastern and southwestern parts of the church are to be ascribed to the time of Adrnerseh and his contemporary, the builder Kiurikē, then the northeastern part must be earlier in time.

It is a matter of common knowledge that Inner Armenia in the eighth and ninth centuries was subjected to Arab rule, to misery and devastation. It is difficult to imagine that a large church could have been built in those centuries; it must have been built prior to the Arab occupation of the country, i.e. in the seventh century.

Quite unsubstantiated is the opinion of Mnac'akanyan that «... hardly any time elapsed after the completion of the church when the necessity arose ... to reconstruct it» (26). If this had been so, the reconstruction would have been undertaken to restore the same building in its original form, it would have preserved the plastic work on the surface of the drum wall and the profiles of the bands, and the arches would have remained the same, the ornamental belt would not have been eliminated, etc. However, as is shown on the photographs, the various parts of the same drum wall display dissimilar architectural details relating them to diverse times and aesthetic systems. It is not by decades that they are differentiated, but by centuries.

Quite right are Takaišvili and Čubinašvili when they see an immediate connection, similarity, and related properties between the churches of Banak and Zuart'noc', especially in the details, the repetitions of the structural types, the sculptural techniques, and the thematic and compositional designs, that is, all that concerns, for the most part, the northeastern section of the large drum wall, which is indeed the remnant of the original church originally erected in the seventh century. Čubinašvili writes: «The information left by Smbat [on the church restauration in the days of Adrnerseh] has to be understood as the «second construction» of the principal church, i.e. the rehabilitation associated with the appointment of the new bishop» (27).

Concerning the same question, Takaišvili writes: «If Bana belongs to the seventh century, it... must be considered to have been built by the same Nersēs. No one else at that time in Tao [in Inner Armenia — T. M.] could construct a monument of this sort» (28).

Reliability of the assumption made by Takaišvili is certified by the fact that at that time (652-658/659) Nersēs (i.e. Nersēs the Builder, the Armenian catholicos) resided in his native Tayk' and evidently could make use of the generous means provided by the Byzantine

(26) Mnac'akanyan, *Zvart'noc', op. cit.*, Armenian version, p. 192.

(27) Čubinašvili, *History, loc. cit.*

(28) E. Takaišvili, *The Archaeological Expedition of 1907 in Kola-Oltisi, Changli*, Paris, 1937 (in Georgian), pp. 24-28.

emperor Constans II (641-668) with whom he was in close relations to construct the church of Banak with the intention of strengthening the immediate influence of the emperor in that region.

It was initially Nersēs himself who created that type of church and he also propagated it. In the middle ages the idea of reconstruction was occasionally rendered by using the word «to construct». No significant difference was made between those two notions and substantial compensation was provided to the reconstructing personnel to make it worth their while. Therefore, pephaps it was this way with the historian Smbat who called Adrnerseh «the constructor» while he was actually *reconstructing* the edifice. So, it was only Adrnerseh who commanded the extensive resources necessary for such a major rebuilding.

The restoration scheme of Kldiašvili includes whatever there was in the church of Banak at the beginning of the twentieth century. Kalgin's reconstruction provides the appearance taken on by the monument after the vast reconstruction of the tenth century. The third successive reconstruction is a compromising synthesis between the two. Our reconstruction represents the original form of Banak based on all available data.

We believe that in the reconstructions by Mnac'akanyan, and after that of Mepisashvili and Tsintsadze, the church's once distinguished architectural qualities have been stripped from it, both distorting and improverishing the building. These reconstructions have done an injustice to the scientific information gathered by the years of careful study of this important monument.